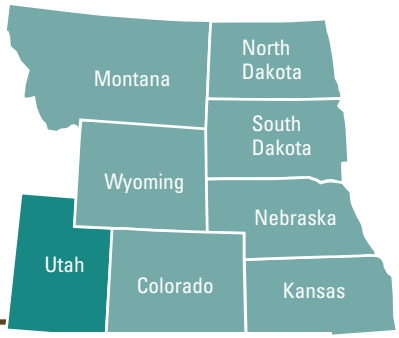
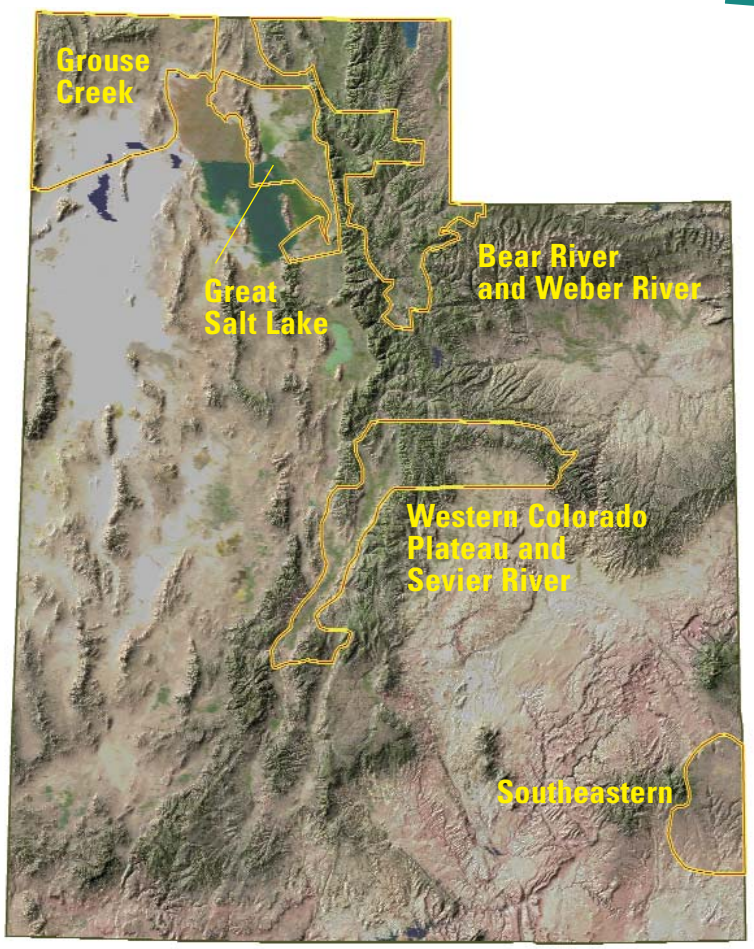
Utah





Utah Partners Program Conservation Focus Areas

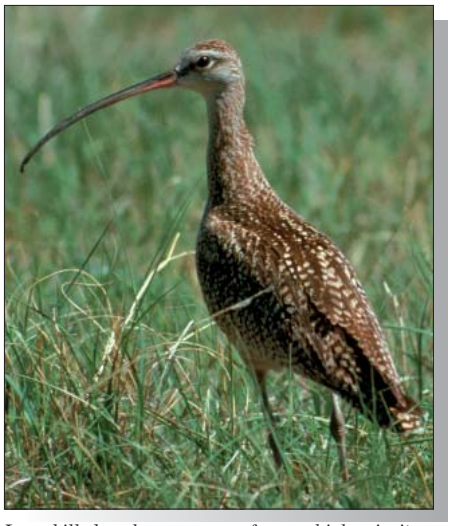
Introduction

Utah is the 13th largest state in the nation, but only approximately 20% (16,980 square miles or 10,867,200 acres) of its land base is privately owned (Utah facts). Still, the distribution of private land ownership represents considerable fish and wildlife habitat restoration potential.

Utah is the second driest state in the nation, receiving an annual average 13 inches of precipitation (Water facts). The dry climate makes lakes, streams, and springs places of critical importance for both humans and federal trust resources. Privately owned property along these water rich areas is often critical habitat for Service trust species. Sagebrush-steppe habitat, associated with low precipitation zones, is another valuable habitat type to numerous Service trust species.

Despite the low amount of precipitation, Utah has an important wetland habitat component primarily located around the Great Salt Lake, recognized as the 4th largest terminal lake in the world. This wetland complex provides valuable habitat to migrating and resident waterfowl and shorebirds. The Great Salt Lake wetland area has one of the world's largest white-faced ibis colonies located within its associated wetlands, as well as one of the top three American white pelican colonies on Gunnison Island. The Great Salt Lake has also been designated as a Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network site, recognizing the area's importance to provide critical habitat needs for at least 500,000 shorebirds annually.

Threats to key habitats include establishment of invasive species, housing development along the Wasatch front and along the eastern side of the Great Salt Lake wetland area, channel alterations affecting instream and riparian habitats, and loss of plant communities due to current and past agricultural land use practices.



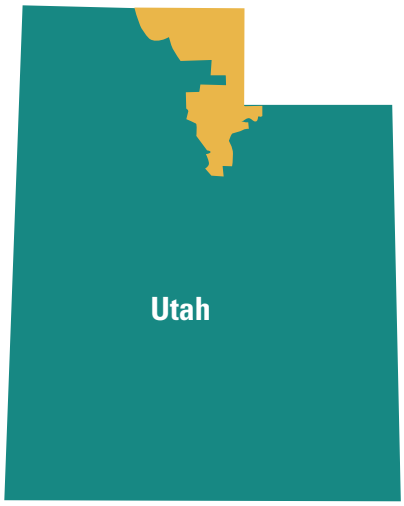
Long-billed curlews are one of many high priority shorebird species that benefit from both wetland and grassland habitat restoration projects. USFWS Photo.

Focus areas were developed using the following criteria:

- Species diversity and trust responsibility
- Delineation of intact landscapes
- Threats
- Public land/private land relationships and patterns
- Partnership opportunities

The development of focus areas also involved input from the following entities:

- Service's Salt Lake City Ecological Services Field Office
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- Utah Association of Conservation Districts
- Farm Bureau



Bear River and Weber River Focus Area

The Bear River and Weber River Watersheds Conservation Focus Area is located in the northeast portion of the state. This area contains wetland, shrub-steppe, stream, and riparian habitats. The Partners Program's main goal is to work with private landowners owning rangeland within this focus area.

Priority Species

- Greater sage-grouse
- Black-necked stilt
- American avocet
- Long-billed curlew
- Bonneville cutthroat trout

Primary Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Efforts

- Upland Restoration
  - Seeding
  - Grazing Management
  - Invasive Species Control
  - Sagebrush Management
- Stream and Riparian Restoration
  - Channel Re-design
  - Riparian Plantings
  - Invasive Species Control
  - Grazing Management
- Wetland Restoration and Enhancement
  - Silt Removal
  - Dike Construction

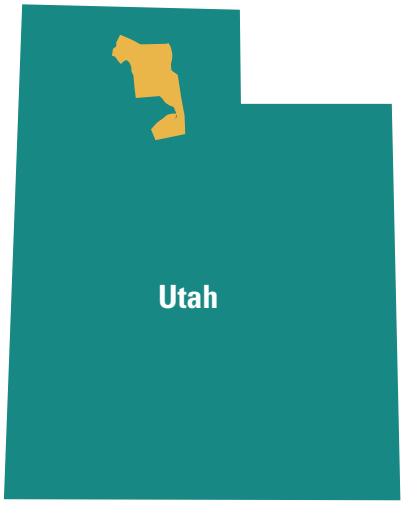
This river restoration project benefits Bonneville cutthroat trout as well as many riparian-nesting neotropical migratory birds. USFWS Photo.

Bear River and Weber River Watersheds Focus Area Five-year Targets

Habitat
- Wetland Restoration/Enhancement: 45 acres
- Upland Restoration/Enhancement: 2,100 acres
- Stream/Riparian Restoration/Enhancement: 1.5 miles

Partnerships
- Number of private landowners: 15
- Number of new partners (in addition to landowners): 1
- Percentage of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

Related Plans
- Intermountain West Joint Venture 2005
- Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Utah (Utah Steering Commmittee 2005)
- Partners in Flight physiographic regions (Pashley et al. 2000)
  - Basin and Range
  - Utah Mountains
  - Wyoming Basin
- Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (Gorell et al. 2005)
- Range-Wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Bonneville Cutthroat Trout (Lentsch et al. 2000)
- Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitat (Connelly et al. 2004)



Great Salt Lake Focus Area

The Great Salt Lake Conservation Focus Area contains the Great Salt Lake and its associated wetland complexes. Wetland types include wet meadow, emergent marsh, submergent marsh, and playa. The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is located within this focus area and

Wetland complexes provide valuable habitat for American avocets and other shorebirds. USFWS Photo.

many Partners Program projects have already been completed in the vicinity of this refuge. The Partners Program's main goal is to work with private landowners along the shore of the Great Salt Lake and around its associated wetlands.

Priority Species

- Cinnamon teal
- Snowy plover
- Black-necked stilt
- American avocet
- Long-billed curlew

Primary Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Activities

- Wetland Restoration and Enhancement
  - Installing or replacing water control structures and water delivery systems
  - Construction of shallow water impoundments to prolong season of use and utilize spring runoff
  - Control of non-native phragmites and tamarisk

Great Salt Lake Focus Area Five-year Targets

Habitat

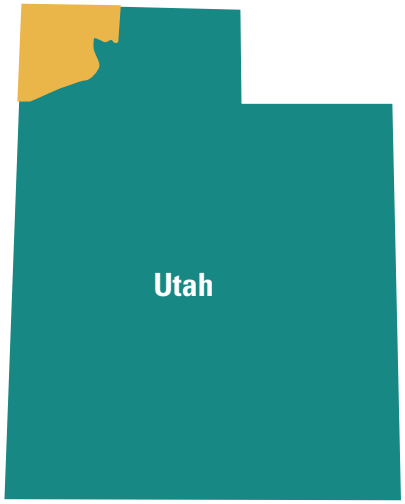
- Wetland Restoration: 40 acres
- Upland Restoration: 375 acres

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 10
- Number of new partners (in addition to landowners): 2
- Percentage of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

Related Plans

- Intermountain West Joint Venture 2005
- Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network
- Intermountain West Regional Shorebird Plan (Oring, Neel, and Oring 2006)
- Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Utah
- Partners in Flight physiographic regions
  - Basin and Range
- Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan 2004



Priority Species

- Greater sage-grouse
- Sage sparrow
- Boreal toad
- Yellowstone cutthroat trout
- Least chub
- Lahontan cutthroat trout*

*Although not native to Utah, the Lahontan cutthroat trout is a federally listed threatened species found in two small Utah streams. Work has been done to use these populations to stock Nevada waters, where it is a native species, as part of a recovery program.

Primary Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Activities

- Upland Restoration and Enhancement
  - Seeding
  - Sagebrush Management
  - Grazing Management
- Riparian and Stream Restoration
  - Grazing Management
- Construction of small ponds

Grouse Creek Focus Area

The Grouse Creek Conservation Focus Area contains the Grouse Creek and Pilot mountain ranges, situated in the northwest portion of the state. The primary habitat types that restoration efforts focus on include sagebrush-steppe communities, riparian and stream areas, and natural spring areas. A significant amount of upland sagebrush work is done in conjunction with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Utah Division of Wild life Resources, as well as local sage-grouse working groups.

These large intact landscapes of sagebrush-steppe habitat are critical habitat for sagebrush obligate species, such as greater sage-grouse and sage sparrow. USFWS Photo.

Grouse Creek Focus Area Five-year Targets

Habitat

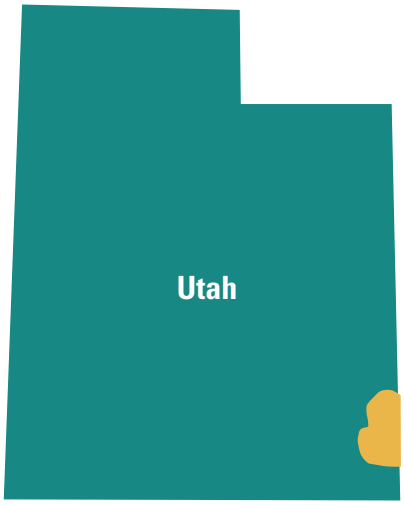
- Upland Restoration/Enhancement: 700 acres
- Riparian Restoration: 0.25 miles

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 5
- Number of new partners (in addition to landowners): 1
- Percentage of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

Related Plans

- Intermountain West Joint Venture
- Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Utah
- Partners in Flight physiographic regions
  - Basin and Range
- Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
- Box Elder Adaptive Resource Management Plan
- Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitat
- Boreal toad (*Bufo boreas boreas*) Conservation Plan in the State of Utah (Hogrefe et al. 2005)
- Conservation agreement and strategy for least chub (*Iotichthys phlegethontis*) in the State of Utah (Bailey, Wilson, and Anderson 2005)



Southeastern Focus Area

The Southeastern Conservation Focus Area is located in the area of Utah near Monticello, extending to the Colorado border. Primary habitat restoration efforts focus on upland sagebrush communities and small irrigated areas.

Priority Species

- Greater sage-grouse
- Gunnison sage-grouse (only located in this area and an adjacent area in Colorado)
- Sage thrasher
- Sage sparrow

Primary Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Activities

- Upland Restoration and Enhancement
  - Seeding
  - Sagebrush Management
  - Grazing Management
- Riparian and Stream Restoration
  - Grazing Management
- Construction of small ponds and establishment of small wet meadows

Sagebrush-steppe and wet meadows provide breeding, resting, and feeding habitat for the greater sage-grouse. Photo by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

Southeastern Focus Area Five-year Targets

Habitat

- Upland Restoration/Enhancement: 15 acres

Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 5
- Number of new partners (in addition to landowners): 2
- Amount of technical assistance: 29 staff days
- Percentage of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

Related Plans

- Intermountain West Joint Venture
- Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Utah
- Partners in Flight physiographic regions
  - Colorado Plateau
- Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
- Gunnison Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*) Conservation Plan, San Juan County, Utah

Utah prairie dogs benefit from habitat restoration projects in the Western Colorado Plateau. Photo by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

Western Colorado Plateau and Sevier River Focus Area

The Western Colorado Plateau and Sevier River Conservation Focus Area is located in the central part of Utah. The primary habitat types that restoration efforts focus on sagebrush-steppe communities, wet meadow communities, and riparian/stream habitats.

Priority Species

- Greater sage-grouse
- Leatherside chub
- Columbia spotted frog
- Utah prairie dog (Threatened)

Primary Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Activities

- Upland restoration
  - Seeding
  - Grazing Management
  - Invasive Species Control
  - Sagebrush Management
- Stream and Riparian Restoration
  - Channel Re-design
  - Riparian Plantings
  - Invasive Species Control
  - Grazing Management
- Wetland Restoration and Enhancement
  - Silt Removal
  - Dike Construction

Western Colorado Plateau and Sevier River Focus Area Five-year Targets

Habitat

- Upland Restoration/Enhancement: 245 acres
- Wetland Restoration/Enhancement: 5 acres
- Reparian/Stream Restoration: 0.25 miles

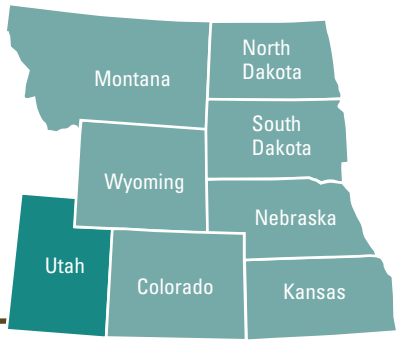
Partnerships

- Number of private landowners: 5
- Number of new partners (in addition to landowners): 1
- Amount of technical assistance: 13 staff days
- Percentage of leveraging (ratio Service to Partner): 1:3

Related Plans

- Intermountain West Joint Venture 2005
- Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Utah
- Partners in Flight physiographic regions
  - Colorado Plateau
  - Utah Mountains
- Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
- Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Spotted Frog (Perkins and Lentsch 1998)

Utah Statewide Goals



Improve Information Sharing and Communication

Five-year Targets

- Participate in all USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Committee meetings. Provide Service representation to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and USDA Farm Service Agency on Farm Bill conservation program administration and delivery.
- Attend other state-wide meetings including the following:
  - Intermountain West Joint Venture annual meeting
  - Sage-grouse working group meetings (minimum of two per year)
  - Northern Utah working group meetings (minimum of one per year)
- Develop Cooperative Agreement with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to share funding and available resources for projects benefiting federal trust species.
- Coordinate with other Service offices to consolidate efforts for Service trust species.
- Develop a Service trust species list for Utah.
- 75% of projects reported in HabITS will have accompanying project photos.
- Complete Partners Program annual report detailing number of technical assistance contacts.
- Produce a minimum of one popular publication each year highlighting Partners Program projects in Utah.
- Meet with and provide information to other interested Service offices detailing Partners Program work in Utah.
- Share habitat restoration accomplishment data with other agencies/organizations.

Enhance Our Workforce

The Utah Partners Program currently funds one full-time biologist. There is no state coordinator for Utah. Because of this lack of staffing, the biologist is responsible for all the on-the-ground field work, technical assistance, and administrative assignments. This poses a difficult situation and prevents the Utah Partners Program from functioning at minimum capacity.

To address the habitat restoration and enhancement needs for high priority federal trust resources in Utah, new conservation focus areas have been identified. Although they have been identified, additional staffing is needed to meet the habitat goals for these areas. New staffing would immediately be able to begin on-the-ground habitat restoration projects, as landowner contacts have been made and there are many interested landowners within these identified conservation focus areas.

Five-year Targets

- Complete a minimum of 40 hours training each year
  - Media and public outreach training
  - Grant writing training
  - Resource-oriented training such as GIS, census techniques, etc.
- Leadership program
  - Attend leadership training and share experiences through job shadowing
  - Temporary details to work with other programs and branches within and outside the Service
- In accordance with the Service's Employee Performance Appraisal System, performance and special achievement awards will be used to recognize exceptional projects and staff efforts.
- Increase current staff by one field biologist and one state coordinator to achieve minimum staffing capacity for the Utah Partners Program.

Increase Accountability

Five-year Targets

- Achieve 90% habitat restoration/enhancement project accomplishments within identified Partners Program focus areas.
- 100% of projects are linked to trust species in HabITS.
- Projects reported in HabITS will have accompanying project photos
  - 75% of projects will contain "before restoration" photo documentation in HabITS
  - 50% of projects will contain "after restoration" photo documentation within three years of being entered into HabITS
  - Conduct follow-up inspection of 50% of projects within three years of project completion and have inspection entered into HabITS.

Program focus areas.

- 95% accuracy for data entry into HabITS.

Program focus areas.

- Complete 100% HabITS data entry by established due date each fiscal year.

External Factors

There are several external factors that could have adverse effects to the Utah Partners Program. One significant external factor would be the lack of staff and project funds to adequately meet the five-year targets. In order to fully meet the goals and objectives identified within this plan, the Utah Partners Program will need at least one additional field biologist to allow for a minimum staffing capacity for Partners Program operations. Opportunities to expand on-the-ground habitat restoration into new focus areas have been identified. Many landowners have expressed interest in completing habitat restoration and enhancement projects on their lands. Partnerships that have been formed throughout the state can easily be expanded to accommodate additional work within these identified focus areas. Without the expansion of the Utah Partners Program, several at-risk species will continue to be imperiled, due to habitat degradation from urban sprawl, poor grazing management practices, surface mining, and energy development.